

THE
CHURCH MEMBERS'
CATECHISM,

OR,
CONVERSATIONS CONCERNING THE DUTIES AND
PRIVILEGES OF

Christian Churches.

BY R. TREFFRY.

"The cement of discipline wanting, the Church will not be like a spiritual house, compacted of lively stones into one goodly pile; but like a company of scattered pebbles, or a heap of rubbish." *Barrow.*

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TO THE
WESLEYAN MINISTERS
OF THE
BRISTOL DISTRICT,
THE FOLLOWING MANUAL,
(PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,)

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY

Inscribed,

BY

THEIR SINCERE FRIEND AND BROTHER,

R. TREFFRY.

BRISTOL,
June 17, 1835.

THE HISTORY OF THE

CITY OF BOSTON

From the first settlement of the city in 1630 to the present time. The history of the city of Boston is a history of the growth of a great city from a small fishing village. The city was founded by a group of Puritan settlers who came to the Massachusetts Bay in 1630. They were led by John Winthrop, who gave the city its name. The city grew rapidly in the 17th century, and by the 18th century it was one of the most important cities in the colonies. The city was the center of the American Revolution, and it was here that the first battle of the war was fought. The city was also the center of the abolitionist movement, and it was here that many of the great leaders of the movement were born and lived. The city has a rich and varied history, and it is one of the most important cities in the United States.

THE CHURCH MEMBERS' CATECHISM.

QUESTION. WHAT is a christian church ?

ANSWER. The word church signifies an assembly or congregation, convened either for lawful or unlawful purposes. By a christian church we understand an assembly of christians ; or “ a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance.” The word church is sometimes used to denote any separate denomination of christians, distinguished by particular doctrines, or modes of worship ; as the Romish church, Greek church, or English church. And sometimes the term is to be understood in a more general sense, as referring to all who throughout the world profess faith in CHRIST, and acknowledge him to be the Saviour of mankind.

Q. Is the word church used in the Scriptures uniformly to describe individuals ?

A. Yes : hence such texts as the following. Tell it to the church.—Then had the churches rest, and walked in the fear of the Lord.—Greet the church.—Salute the church.—Great fear came upon all the church, and Feed the church.—These, with many other passages which will be familiar to my readers, furnish sufficient evidence that the term church was

used to describe persons only. In Acts xix. 37, the phrase "robbers of churches" occurs, which seems to favour the opinion that the word "churches" meant houses consecrated to religious worship; but the expression signifies, and would have been more correctly translated, "spoilers of sacred places."

Q. Were the members of the New Testament churches numerous?

A. The first christian church was established at Jerusalem, and soon after the feast of Pentecost it received accessions to its numbers to the amount of some thousands; but subsequently there arose a great persecution against the church, and the members were scattered abroad through the region of Judea and Samaria; of course in some places, the churches were composed of few persons only: Tertullian thought that *three* individuals were sufficient to form a church; and St. Paul, writing to Philemon, mentions the church which was in his house; plainly signifying that even a christian family, may be justly denominated a church.

Q. How were the members of the primitive church distinguished?

A. By their separation from the world. The church and the world have ever formed two distinct societies. Of the Jewish church, it was said, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." And "this people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise." And as an evidence that the christian church possesses the same character of separation from the world, the following divinely inspired admonitions are recorded.—Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.—Come out from among them,

and be ye separate, saith the Lord ; and touch not the unclean thing.--Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. But this separation from the world was not a sanctimonious, or hypocritical singularity ; it was not engendered by vanity, or self conceit ; it bore no likeness to that spirit of arrogance, which said, " Stand by thyself, come not near to me, I am holier than thou." Much less did it resemble popish seclusion from society in monasteries and nunneries, those retreats of idleness, and filth, fraud and licentiousness, resorted to under the pretext of escaping the contaminating influence of the world. The members of the primitive churches had their conversation in the world ; they mixed promiscuously with human society ; they worked with their own hands that they might provide things honest in the sight of all men, and give to them that needed. They bought, and sold ; they were diligent in business, and wrought with labour and travail, night and day. " These hands," said St. Paul, " have ministered unto my necessities, and unto them who were with me." But they held no unnecessary intercourse with the world ; they chose not the men of the world for their companions ; the friendship of this world they held to be enmity with God, and conformity to the world they invariably discountenanced, both by precept and example. And this separation from worldly society may be traced to a most legitimate and powerfully operative cause : it grew out of that moral, and soul transforming change, which had been effected in them. They were " born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever," and though they were in the world,

yet they were not of the world. Some of them had previously walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: but they had turned to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God; and their former besotted companions, wholly ignorant of that divine transformation by which they were made new creatures in Christ Jesus, thought it strange that they continued not to run with them into the same excess of riot. Happy for the world were there more of this holy singularity at present exhibited among the professors of Christianity! But alas! how little of it is discoverable in their conduct! How nearly do they approximate to the world in their demeanour! What frivolity of disposition! What fashionable and expensive adornments! What a propensity to indulge in sumptuous entertainments! Not that the line of distinction which divides the church from the world is taken away. Christianity has abated none of its requirements. But the profession and practice of christianity are too frequently at variance with each other.

Q. Was separation from the world the only mark by which the members of the primitive churches were distinguished?

A. No, they were also distinguished by the sanctity of their characters and the consistency of their conduct. The life that they lived in the flesh, was by the faith of the Son of God, who had loved them and given himself for them: hence they were blameless, and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they shone as lights in the world: and they so lived, as by well doing to put to silence

the ignorance of foolish men. The principles by which they were actuated, were faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love to his holy name. The maxims by which they were governed, were the precepts and commands of God; which prohibited all sin, and inculcated sobriety, righteousness, and godliness; and the object at which they aimed was to glorify God in their bodies and spirits which were God's.

Q. But were there no disorderly persons who scandalized their profession among them?

A. Yes, there were some who were idle, refusing to work with their hands; some who prated with malicious words, some who were busy-bodies in other men's matters, and some who sought to promote schisms and divisions in the body; but the faithful were charged to mark them, that is, "to look attentively and diligently, as they do who are placed in a watch-tower to observe the motions of their enemies," and to avoid them, avoid their company, and their conversation, lest by disputing with them they might be infected by their spirit, and seduced by their errors; for as St. Paul told Timothy, "their word will eat as doth a canker," destroying the soul, as a gangrene destroys the body.

Q. On what terms or conditions were members received into the primitive church?

A. It does not appear that any previous purity of character was required; or that the candidates for church membership, were received among the saints in consequence of their professed adherence to any human creeds, or forms of doctrine; but that a conviction, and an acknowledgment of the evil of their doings, a desire to bring forth fruits meet for repent-

ance, and a belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Saviour of the world, were deemed the only essential prerequisites for church membership.

Q. But are not some persons deterred from joining themselves to christian societies, under an impression that they are unworthy of such an honour; and that they must make themselves better, before they are fit to be received into the church?

A. Yes, this is possible; but it is altogether a mistake; a device of the devil to beguile unwary souls. Christian churches bear no resemblance to joint stock companies, where every member must bring a certain proportion of capital, in order that he may participate in the profits of the concern. Here poverty of spirit is the most necessary qualification of membership; he who feels most bitterly the plague of his own heart, and sees himself most unworthy of being admitted into union with the people of God, is often best fitted for that admission.

Q. How was the discipline of the primitive churches maintained?

A. By its ministers: they were responsible to the great head of the church for the good order of the societies committed to their care.

Q. What were the duties which devolved upon them?

A. First. They admitted members into the church. This was usually done by baptism, which was considered as the rite of initiation into the *Christian* church, as circumcision was into the *Jewish* church. That ministers derived their authority to baptize from Christ, is indisputable: "Go," said he to his disciples, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost." The three thousand who were added to the church at the feast of Pentecost, were initiated by baptism performed by the apostles; and as this was all done in one day, the supposition that the credibility of their profession was satisfactorily attested before the members of the church, is too absurd to command credence. Many who now apply for admission into the christian church, were baptized in their infancy; but this circumstance does not transfer the right of introducing them, from the pastor to the people. "The light of nature," says Dr. Watts, "shews us, that those persons who are furnished with talents, and chosen, and called, and solemnly appointed to preach the gospel to men, are the most proper persons to administer, or celebrate such rites or ordinances as should be attended with the word and prayer."

Secondly. They watched over the souls of the people, under a solemn consciousness of their responsibility to God. They instructed them in their duties, warned them of their dangers, and comforted them under their trials.

Thirdly. They reproved unworthy members. Such as were not sound in the faith, and were carried about with divers and strange doctrines.—Such as walked disorderly, who refused obedience to their pastoral teachers—and such as were proud, who loved to have the pre-eminence, and who doted about questions and strifes of words, and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.

Fourthly. They expelled incorrigible offenders from the society of the faithful. Thus St. Paul pronounced the sentence of expulsion on the incestuous person at Corinth, and by his individual authority said, "Put

away from you that wicked person." And to the disaffected and factious of the same church, he says, "I told you before, and foretel you as if I were present the second time, and being absent, now I write unto them which heretofore have sinned, that if I come again I will not spare:" that is, "I will inflict the proper punishment upon every incorrigible offender;" or, according to a noted commentator, "St. Paul gives them to understand, that he had a full purpose to come unto them with his rod of ecclesiastical discipline, and church censures, and would not spare a man of them, but execute that power on the impenitent, which Christ had given him, by excluding such unreclaimed offenders from church communion." And concerning Hymeneus and Alexander, who had put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, St. Paul said, "whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme;" which expression, whatever else it means, must at least include excommunication from the church. The Epistles to the seven Asiatic churches, were dedicated to the angel, minister, or pastor of these churches, and this pastor had the peculiar care of the flock; on him the prosperity of that congregation in a great measure depended, and he was to answer for all those souls at the judgment seat of Christ, and he is therefore commended, or blamed, according as he had either discharged or neglected his duty to the church. Thus the minister of the church, at Pergamos, is censured for retaining in the church, them that held the doctrines of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitanes. And in the church of Thyatira, there was a woman who called herself a prophetess, who had seduced some to commit fornication, and to eat things offered unto

idols. Many of the ancients supposed that this was the minister's wife, and he is blamed for suffering her. Now it is plain that if the pastors addressed, had not the power to expel heretics on the one hand, and to silence false teachers on the other, they never could have been reasonably the subjects of reprehension.

Q. Were not the people consulted as to the appointment of their ministers?

A. The New Testament gives no countenance to such an opinion. Candidates for the ministerial office were judged of by ministers, and by them they were ordained, or set apart to their work; and they deemed it their duty to provide for the exigencies of the churches. Thus St. Paul said to Timothy "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." "Though Christ promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against his church, yet means must be used by his servants to guard it against the power of hell." The men to be employed by Timothy were faithful men, and men competent to teach others; yet even these, must not intrude themselves into the ministry, but have the great truths of the gospel committed to them in trust by those already in office. Thus in writing to Titus, St. Paul said, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things which are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." There were many cities in Crete, though its dimensions were not very large. St. Paul had been in that island, and he left Titus there to set in order the things that were wanting; and to rectify the things which were left uncorrected at his departure. For the modelling and governing of the

christian churches, devolved on the persons who had planted them; accordingly most of the churches in the Gentile countries, having been planted by the apostle Paul, were modelled, corrected, and governed by him.

Q. But does it not appear that when the subject of circumcision was agitated in the primitive church, and certain men sought to impose this rite on the gentile converts, that the question was determined by the united voice of the whole church?

A. I am aware that the advocates for ecclesiastical democracy, and universal suffrage in the church, have pressed this portion of sacred history into their service; but an impartial examination of the whole affair will lead all unprejudiced persons to adopt different and more correct views on the subject. The history occurs, Acts 15. The sum of it is, that certain men came from Antioch to Judea, full of Jewish prejudices, and taught the christians in their public and private assemblies that all uncircumcised persons must be lost: but Paul and Barnabas boldly withstood these Judaizing teachers, and disputed with them as the corrupters of genuine christianity; and when a growing dissension seemed to threaten this flourishing church, it was determined that they should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders concerning this question. So they departed, being very respectfully attended part of the way by some chief brethren of the church. When they came to Jerusalem, it is said, ver. 6, that the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter; and because it is added, ver. 12, "then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul," it is inferred that all the disci-

ples in Jerusalem were present. But this inference is extremely questionable. The word multitude, is but another word for assembly, and hence the French translation is, *Alors toute l'assemblée*, which probably means a full assembly of Apostles and Elders: and Beza concludes that all which is mentioned from the sixth to the twenty first verse, passed in a synod of ministers only, and that it was not communicated to the full assembly of the church until afterwards, when they acquiesced in the letter which contained the result of the meeting. But even if it be admitted, that all the disciples in Jerusalem amounting perhaps to some thousands, were present, still this is so far from supporting the doctrine of universal suffrage in the church, that we have no reason for supposing that any persons took part in the debate, or had a voice in the decision of the meeting, except the apostles and elders. Peter spoke, and protested against putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples who were of the uncircumcision; and James terminated the discussion by saying, "My sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the gentiles are turned to God; but we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. That the church acquiesced in this opinion, is evident from ver. 22; but that the apostles and elders were the only persons to whom Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to make their appeal, (ver. 2,) and that they only came together to consider the matter, is in my mind unquestionable; and this is confirmed by referring to chap. xvi. 4, where it is said of Paul and Silas, "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the

decrees for to keep, which were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem."

Q. Is every christian professor laid under obligations to join himself to some branch of the church of Christ, or is it a matter merely optional with him, to do as he likes, and to get to heaven in his own way?

A. There is nothing optional in religion; right and wrong are immutable things; and a man's inclinations must never be made the rules of his duty. Every christian is imperatively bound to maintain church fellowship. Only suppose that one christian has a right to refrain from uniting himself with the church, and on the same principle another possesses an equal right; and were this assumption universally acted upon, the church would soon cease to exist. Some are daily passing from the church militant to the church triumphant; and unless the former receive additions from the world, its numbers must necessarily and daily diminish; and the disorganization and extinction of christian churches, would lead to the ruin of christianity. For if there were no christian church, there would be no evangelical ministry, for ministers are the legitimate offspring of churches: they are nurtured in their bosom, and they exercise their functions among them: and by annihilating a standing ministry, which is God's great instrument for effecting the salvation of mankind, you sap the foundation of all christian ordinances, and turn our fruitful land into a barren wilderness.—Nor is this all, God knows none but friends and foes upon earth. "He that is not with me," says the Redeemer, "is against me." There is no neutral ground between the church and the world: no middle path between the narrow way that leadeth unto life, and the broad

way which leadeth unto destruction. The several bodies of professing christians resemble so many encampments of Emmanuel's army, leagued together to oppose the common foe; all else is the devil's territory. And to quit the society of sinners, and to join ourselves to the people of God, is the most public expression of our devoted attachment to Christ, and the most commendable way of confessing him before men. The church of Christ is infinitely dear to him: He hath purchased it with his own blood, and he gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church without spot, or blemish, or any such thing. For the purpose of gathering members into his church, he has raised up a succession of gospel labourers; and for this end, all the means of grace, and the ordinances of religion, are established. Nor can I conceive of any act of our lives, that is more likely to be acceptable to our Redeemer, than our withdrawing from the world, and joining ourselves to a body of christian men and women, who love Christ in sincerity, who are guided by his spirit, governed by his laws, and aiming at his glory.

Q. But may not a man belong to the invisible church of Christ, who is not a member of any visible section of that church?

A. The Bible makes no mention of any invisible church. The churches in the days of Christ and his apostles were all visible churches; so visible, as to be denominated the lights of the world, and cities set on hills that could not be hid; nor is there any intimation given by the New Testament writers, that there were any members of the christian church in the world, but such as were visibly united to some

of the churches which they had been instrumental in planting.

Q. But cannot a person go to heaven unless he be previously joined to some christian society upon earth?

A. Undoubtedly he may. Many have been converted to God on their death beds. And some, like the penitent thief, have gone from an ignominious tree to paradise. Others have been so circumstanced, as to be unavoidably prevented from connecting themselves with any branch of the christian church. But the question is, whether it be possible for a person who is surrounded by christian societies, to be convinced of sin—to break off his sins by repentance—to obtain a sense of pardoning mercy—go on to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord—and finish his course with joy, without having any connexion with the visible church of Christ. To suppose this possible, carries with it the assumption that a person may be finally and eternally saved without the ordinances of the gospel; or that he may avail himself of ordinances furnished by some section of the christian church with which he has no connexion, and towards which he administers no support. The former part of this supposition is scarcely admissible; for though we allow it possible that Heathens may be saved without the gospel, yet men who live within the range of evangelical ordinances, and yet neglect them, can never rationally hope for salvation. Then the only alternative is, that a man may be brought to God, and furnished with helps and means for the furtherance and joy of faith, provided by other churches of the saints. And how in such circumstances he can conscientiously

turn his back on those through whose instrumentality he has been saved, I am at loss to determine.

Q. Are not some deterred from uniting themselves to the church of Christ, by the inconsistent lives of false professors?

A. Yes: but to conclude as many do, that all are false and hypocritical because some disgrace their profession, is as senseless as it is untrue. Did the perfidy of a single Judas, furnish reason for concluding that all the disciples were traitors? Did the hypocrisy of Simon the magician prove that all with whom he associated were hypocrites? What can be more absurd, or unjust, than to charge the guilt of a single individual upon a whole body? We acknowledge that professors have their faults, and their inconsistencies, but how are they exaggerated, and magnified, and blazoned abroad in every direction.

“On eagles’ wings immortal scandal flies.”

To pour contempt on the professors of religion is a practice resorted to with as much avidity as if it were a virtue of the highest order. The church has had its defects; this we allow, and deplore: but let it not be forgotten, that it has had also its shining examples, its holy and self-denying patterns of piety, its martyrs and confessors. And even now it is not without its illustrious advocates, of whom the world is not worthy; and the inconsistent lives of a few false professors, can never justify any for refusing to join the church: for with all its defects, it is yet infinitely superior in moral beauty, and excellency to the world, which is denominated an evil world; a world at enmity with God; a world of ungodly men; and a world that lieth in wickedness; not merely

sunk in the gulf of wickedness, but lying there, enveloped in sin, like the earth in the universal deluge. And for a man to continue in the world, because the church is not good enough for his society, is as nearly allied to madness as it would be for a disordered patient to prefer having his residence in a lazaretto, where contagion, rank and pestilential, holds its baleful influence, and where death was inevitable, rather than in a house of recovery; where thousands had been restored to perfect health, and where a most effectual and remedial process was carrying forward in favour of the few who were yet tainted by disease. Half hearted, formal professors will never be at a loss for pleas and pretexts to palliate their conduct, in continuing without the pale of the church. But the true reason is, they are either wedded to the world, and are therefore loath to leave it, or else they are ashamed of the reproach of Christ, and therefore cowardly shrink from taking up his cross, and openly confessing him before men.

Q. But does not the great variety of sects of which the christian world is composed prove a cause of offence to many?

A. Perhaps it does; but I see no reason why this should be the case. In the present imperfect state of human society, there will necessarily be men of different persuasions. We cannot all think alike on any subject; we have not all equal capacities for examining the truth, nor have we all equal opportunities. The great Head of the church, has wisely permitted this diversity of opinion to exist. But for a man to neglect to join any christian church, because he does not know which is the most pure, and the most evangelical, is fraught with as much absurdity

as it would be for him to neglect to take food when he is hungry, because he does not know which is the most nutritious ; or to neglect to take medicine when he is disordered, because he does not know which is the most sanative, and which will be most likely to remove his complaint.

Q. And do not some omit to join themselves to christian societies through a fear lest they should afterwards fall away and disgrace their profession ?

A. It is possible that such cases may exist, and that persons may be found who are so far deluded by the enemy, as to subject themselves to such an imposition. But to act under the influence of such a sentiment, is to distrust God, to cast away all confidence in the arm of his strength, and to believe that the devil has more power to destroy, than God has to save : and were this principle universally admitted, and acted upon, no man would turn from sin to God ; since there is a possibility of his turning again to folly, and making his last state worse than his first. The helps furnished in the church, are amply sufficient to ensure the stability of all its praying, believing members. Fearfulness may surprise hypocrites ; but the sincere, humble, devoted followers of the lowly Jesus, may trust and not be afraid, for in the Lord Jehovah they have righteousness and strength.

Q. Amidst a multiplicity of sects and parties among us, all professing to be the members of the church of Christ, how is a man to know where Christianity is exhibited in its purest form, and where he shall obtain the most efficient helps in preparing for a world of spirits ?

A. He must judge for himself, and ponder the

path of his feet, that all his goings may be established. His welfare in future life depends much on the choice which he makes of companions in the first stage of his christian pilgrimage. There is such a thing as divine direction; and that inestimable blessing should be sought by fervent prayer to the Father of lights. God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; and that Spirit will guide his devoted followers into all truth. I am very far from thinking that all sections of the church are equally christian; that the doctrine is equally evangelical, the ministry equally faithful, the discipline equally correct, or the members equally pious. Where Christ is not preached in all the dignity of his eternal Godhead, and in all the efficacy of his vicarious and all availing atonement; and where a scheme of superficial morality is substituted for sound scriptural piety, there christianity can have no existence; and where there are no meetings for christian fellowship, and religious experience, and no wholesome discipline maintained, little advantage can be realized from a union with such a people. In the formularies of our national establishment, there is purity of doctrine, but there is no discipline; the members, to use the nervous language of Mr. Wesley, are like "a rope of sand, they have no connexion with each other, unless such as might be among Turks or Heathens;" membership is the birthright of all, but the privilege of none.

Q. Since you lay so much stress on a union with the church of Christ, you must of course think that some considerable advantages are to be derived from that union?

A. That I certainly do: advantages that are ines-

timable, and incalculable; and advantages which none can know who do not enjoy them.

Q. What are those advantages?

A. To enumerate them all is impossible. A few however I will mention. A union with the church of Christ, necessarily induces a divorcement from the world; for we cannot serve God and mammon; and by coming out from among the ungodly, we escape the most fascinating allurements of sinners, and avoid many of the snares which they lay for our feet. Sinners embolden each other in sin; evil communications corrupt good manners; our characters are formed by our companions; and voluntary associations with men of the world, who have their portion in this life, can scarcely fail to make us like them. And considering the prevalence of sin, which nothing short of the power of God can subdue; and how liable we are to be carried away by the tide of temptation, it is an advantage of no ordinary value, to be placed in circumstances where we shall not be led into temptation. Nor is this all: every man possesses some influence in the world, and that influence must either be good or evil; it will tend to the advancement of virtue, or it will facilitate the progress of vice. He who unites himself to the church gives the most public evidence to the world, that he is become a decided character, and that he is determined to throw all his influence into the scale of Christianity. And his example cannot fail to attract the attention of others; they will take knowledge of him, and the good which may be done through his instrumentality exceeds the power of computation. In addition to this, union with the church leads to union with Christ. Between Christ

and his church there is the most intimate and imperishable union. He is the head, and believers are the members of his body, and of his flesh and of his bones; and from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love. Christ is the vine, and the members of his church are the branches; and as the branches derive life and virtue and support from the root, so believers live and grow and bring forth fruit by their union with Christ. Christ is the foundation and the chief corner-stone; and the members of his church are lively stones built up a spiritual house, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Christ is the bridegroom, and his church is the bride, the Lamb's wife; and as a bridegroom rejoiceth over a bride, so Christ rejoiceth over his people to do them good, and being united to him, and precious in his sight, from his fulness they receive, and grace for grace.

Q. And are these the only advantages which the members of the christian church enjoy?

A. No, besides union with Christ, they have union with each other. And the New Testament abounds with such expressions, and images, as lead us to believe that the union which the faithful had with each other in the primitive times, was most intimate and indissoluble. They regarded themselves as members of one family, and they loved as brethren; they were kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake had forgiven them. They were a holy society, and charity which is the bond of perfection, knit them all to-

gether; they were a mystical body, and love circulated through all the members of which that body was composed. And this fervent charity which they cultivated towards each other, was not the result of national alliance, or congeniality of natural disposition, or even uniformity of sentiment; but the entire effect of regeneration. "Beloved" said St. John, "let us love one another, for love is of God, and he that loveth is born of God. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death; he that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." "We are," said Tertullian, "ready to die for each other, and we call one another brethren, because we acknowledge one and the same God the Father, and have been sanctified by the same Holy Spirit, and have been brought from the same state of ignorance to the light of the same marvellous truth." And the love which abounded in the minds of primitive christians towards each other, drew them into the closest intimacy, and made them of one heart and one soul. In them their Saviour's prayer was answered, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." And because they were one they consorted together. Similarity is the soul of fellowship; kindred substances easily coalesce, and get moulded and blended into one.

Q. How was this union maintained?

A. By christian conversation. Conversation is the medium of communication. The fellowship of saints, which forms one of the articles of our christian creed, implies the interchange of pious sentiments, through the intervention of intelligible

language. Christians in the primitive church had their fellowship meetings; and though their judgments, constitutional propensities, intellectual attainments, and worldly circumstances were amazingly diversified, yet being baptized by one spirit into one body, divine love, like the vital current in the human frame, circulated through the whole of its members: hence they came together in one place, and the doors were shut about them, and thus secluded from the world, they prayed with, and for each other, until the house was shaken where they were assembled. There the strong learned to bear the infirmities of the weak; there they wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who rejoiced; there they recorded the righteous acts of the Lord, told of the triumphs of the gospel among the Heathen, and the conversion of the Gentiles; collated the facts they witnessed with the testimonies of the prophets, and kindled up in each other's hearts the liveliest sentiments of joy. Indeed it is in the church, that all the privileges of christianity are exhibited, and realized. It is here that wisdom hath builded her house, and furnished her table; here she invites her guests to eat of her bread, and drink of the wine which she hath mingled. Here are the means of grace, and the ordinances of religion in rich abundance, and variety; here christians take sweet counsel together, and strive to "lighten each other's burdens in this vale of woe." Here the good shepherd leads his people into green pastures, and beside the still waters; here the brightest examples of piety are seen, the most fervent and importunate prayers are offered, the sounds of rejoicing and salvation are heard, and from the church militant, the church of the first-born in heaven is furnished with its glorified inhabitants.

Q. But is there not a danger lest the members of christian churches fall into the sin of schism ?

A. Yes, but many mistake the nature of schism. The word literally means a rent, and it is applied in the New Testament, not to a division *from* the church, but to a division or alienation of affection *in* it. Thus in the church at Corinth, the schism was in the body ; that is, there were divisions and contentions among the members ; the preachers had different gifts, and the people were divided into parties under their ministry. One said I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. And it is much to be lamented, that the most watchful vigilance which ministers have been able to exercise, has in some instances been unavailing for the preservation of peace and union in their several churches. "When people in the same church," saith Baxter, "do gather into *private meetings*, not under the *guidance* of their *pastors* to edify one another in holy exercises in love and peace, but in *opposition* to their lawful pastors, or to one another, to propagate their singular opinions, and increase their parties, and speak against those that are not on their side—schism is then ready to break forth, and multiply, and the swarm is ready to come forth and be gone."

Q. What are the duties which devolve upon the members of Christian churches ?

A. One of their most important duties, is to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. There is the doctrine of faith, as well as the grace of faith ; the object, as well as the act : and the latter can be influential, only as the former is genuine. Where the foundation is false, the fabric must fall. Almost as soon as a christian church was

established upon earth, the subtilty of the devil was employed in seeking to subvert the faith upon which it was founded. False doctrines, and antichristian opinions, were extensively propagated; and there were those who cast off their first faith—who denied the faith—and made shipwreck of faith; and the apostles spoke of such, in terms of unqualified censure and condemnation: and they used a variety of cautions and admonitions to guard the primitive believers against the insidious seductions of men of corrupt minds, who were reprobate concerning the faith. “Many deceivers,” saith St. John, “are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” And if in the primitive ages of christianity, the doctrine of faith could not be preserved inviolate, by men who were divinely inspired to propagate it, and who could work miracles for its confirmation, can we reasonably expect in these latter days, to escape the contagion of false doctrine? The fashion of the present age is notoriously sceptical; profane indifference assumes the name of candour; and among a certain class of professors, faith is nothing, and morality every thing: if a man’s life, it is said, be right, his faith cannot be wrong. As if a corrupt faith

could produce a correct life; or men could gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, or error could generate truth. Never was it more needful for the members of christian churches, to be on their guard against deceitful workers, and seducing spirits, than it is at present. Never was error decked out in more fascinating and delusive attire. Never was poison made more palatable to the taste, than it is in modern compositions. Sentiments derogatory to the person, work, and honour of Jesus Christ—subversive of sound evangelical morality, and hostile to the whole spirit of revealed religion, are disseminated with an industry worthy of a better cause. Therefore as the church is the pillar and ground of truth, as it is there that the truth as it is in Jesus is deposited, let its members keep that which is committed unto their trust. Let them hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear.

It also behoves christian professors to comply with the rules and regulations of that section of the church to which they have voluntarily and in good faith united themselves. The peculiar form of church government, "Christ hath left undetermined, and of course christian societies have a discretionary power of modelling the government of the church in such a manner as the circumstantial reasons of time and place may require; and every christian society has a right to make laws for itself, provided that these laws are consistent with charity and peace, and with the fundamental doctrines and principles of Christianity." Hence it is assumed, that every christian society has rules to which its members conform, and by which

their conduct is regulated. A society without rules resembles a kingdom without laws, or a city without walls. He therefore, who cannot make up his mind to comply conscientiously with the rules of that particular part of the christian church to which he is invited to unite himself, will of course as a matter of duty abstain from doing it; and if after having joined it, he should at any future time see reason for changing his mind concerning the usages of his society, he should quietly withdraw from it; for whatever notions or opinions a man may entertain of the rules necessary for the regulation of christian societies, he cannot fail in this country, where church government is administered in such various forms, to find a people of congenial sentiments with his own, to whom he can unhesitatingly unite himself, and with whom he can enjoy the fellowship of saints.

The next duty which devolves upon the members of christian societies is to maintain an external consistency of deportment;—to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. For whatever rules or regulations the founders of christian societies may have instituted, they must all be subordinate to the gospel rule, which binds christians to abstain from the very appearance of evil, to be zealous of good works, and to exercise a patient continuance in well doing. Nothing was more strenuously insisted on by the apostles in their directions to the primitive christians, than evangelical consistency. They were exhorted to walk as children of the light—to be in their behaviour as becometh holiness—to follow peace with all men, and by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. He who joins himself to any branch of the christian church, is bound by the

most plain, positive, and reiterated precepts of christianity to walk as Christ walked. He who neglects to do this, belies his profession; he is no better than a hypocrite, a public dissembler, an enemy to religion, and through him christianity is brought into disrepute, and Christ is wounded in the house of his friends.

Q. What other duties besides those which you have mentioned, are the members of christian churches obligated to perform?

A. They are bound to cultivate a peaceable and forbearing demeanour towards their fellow members. Jesus Christ is the prince of peace, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. His last legacy to his disciples was his peace; the church is the region of peace; and all its members are to have peace one with another; and to live in peace, that the God of love and peace may be with them.

Q. But have the members of christian societies been always attentive to this part of their duty?

A. No; I am free to confess, and it is a subject most deeply to be deplored, that the harmony of the church has not unfrequently been interrupted; sometimes by haughty, high minded professors, who love to have the pre-eminence, and who are impatient of contradiction: at other times by false and designing men, who creep unawares into the church and beguile unstable souls; form parties, create divisions, and factions; to the great discredit of christianity, and the grief and hurt of those who are over them in the Lord. When a man therefore unites himself to a christian society, he should consider that he is bound to live in peace with his fellow members; that he

must be a peace maker, and not a peace disturber. He must pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and lead a quiet and peaceable life ; and in order to this he must put on charity which is the bond of perfectness ; which suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. He must never stir up strife among brethren, by tattling, tale bearing, or evil speaking ; all of which are hostile to the spirit of christianity, and mischievous to society. And instead of obtruding himself into office, and seeking to sustain a place of distinction in the church, for which perhaps he has no qualification, he should wait until he is brought into notice, and called into action by the proper authorities or officers of the society to which he belongs. Church members should also, according to the best of their ability, promote the welfare and prosperity of that particular society to which they have deemed it their duty to unite themselves. Without being blindly bigotted, or superstitiously attached to their own party, to the exclusion of all others from the fold of Christ, they are nevertheless obliged, on the principle of consistency, to believe that the people with whom they are united, are more sound in their doctrines, more evangelical in their experience, and more moral in their practices, than any people with whom they are acquainted. Thus circumstanced, they are bound to do their utmost to increase the number of their church members ; not by pursuing a system of proselytism, robbing other churches, and thinning the folds of other christian pastors ; but by going out into the wilderness after lost sheep, who have wandered from the good shepherd in a cloudy and dark day. By winning souls to Christ from the

world ; by making inroads on the usurped territories of the devil, and plucking the spoil out of his teeth. It is from christian churches that the influence must go forth to convert mankind to God ; from them the word of the Lord must sound out, and they must furnish the means for renovating and fertilizing the waste places of the earth. And while they seek to enlarge the borders of their Zion, by the influence of their example, and the prevalency of their prayers, they should also contribute of their substance, to further the cause of benevolence. Connected with almost every section of the christian church, there are established charitable institutions, such as Sunday Schools, Tract and Missionary Societies, which have for their object the extension of religious knowledge, and evangelical morality ; and these must be supported by the members of the several churches with which they are connected. It is a matter of great joy, that much of late years has been done in this way ; and large sums of money have been raised by the churches of the saints, and unparalleled success has crowned their labours. But much more might be done were every man to give of his substance according to the apostolical direction, as God hath prospered him. The poor, do give of their penury, and in many cases their deep poverty abounds unto the riches of their liberality ; but the wealthy members of christian churches seldom bestow a proportionate part of their substance to further the cause of christianity. How enormous are the sums which are yearly cast into the vortex of sensuality, and how scanty the pittance which is dealt out to advance the cause of benevolence ! Wealth is a talent for which we are responsible, and for which we must

give an account at the final audit; and therefore instead of laying it up, we should lay it out, in making to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail they may receive us into everlasting habitations.

Q. But you have not said any thing of the conduct which christians are to maintain towards their ministers; have you nothing to suggest on that subject?

A. I take it for granted that the members of christian churches must maintain their ministers; not on the ground of charity, or alms giving, but as a matter of debt. Our divine Legislator has determined, that the labourer is worthy of his hire. They who minister about holy things live of the sacrifice, and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar; even so hath the Lord also ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. Therefore saith the apostle, Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things; for, saith he, "if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing," or unreasonable for us to expect, or for you to give, that "we shall reap your carnal things," when the value between the spiritual blessings which we communicate, and the pittance that we receive, is so disproportionate? Added to this, the affectionate respect of the people is due to their ministers. The ministerial office is divinely instituted, it has for its object the present and endless benefit of man; and though some by their insufferable arrogance, and ridiculous airs of self adulation, bring their office into contempt, and cause their good to be evil spoken of; yet those ministers, whose conduct comports with their high

vocation, should be esteemed very highly for their work's sake ; and this esteem should be evinced by such palpable proofs, as to prevent any suspicion arising in a minister's mind, as to the genuineness of his people's affection for him : for while on the one hand they studiously avoid the fawning flattery of sycophants, they should on the other, with equal care, guard against that spirit of captiousness which takes offence at every trifle. The members of christian churches are especially bound to hold up the hands of their ministers by sincere and ardent prayers for their success, by kind and courteous conduct towards them, and by a regular attendance on their ministry. In the apostolic age, there were those who had "itching ears," and similar characters are now to be found in almost all christian congregations.—Individuals who are influenced by a spirit of unhallowed curiosity, and who rove about to different places of worship. A funeral sermon, or a popular preacher, or a sunday school anniversary, possesses charms of irresistible attraction ; and hence while one congregation is thinned, another is crowded to excess, to the great annoyance of the regular worshippers. This is a practice which should be discountenanced by all who wish well to the interests of Zion ; as it fosters a spirit hostile to true devotion, leads to the establishment of dissipated habits, not unfrequently induces improper connexions, and often ends in apostacy. And while the members of christian churches conduct themselves towards their ministers with affectionate respect, they should also submit to their pastoral authority. That some kind of government belongs to christian ministers is too obvious to be denied. Hence such Scriptures as the following,

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves”—“Know them that are over you in the Lord”—“Remember them that have the rule over you”—“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour”—“Rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith”—“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority.” Such Scriptures cannot be explained but on the principle that there is pastoral authority in the church: an authority that grows out of the ministerial office, and is inseparably connected with it. And where there is authority on the one hand, there should be submission on the other. “Every christian church is a society; no society can abide in any comely order, any steady, quiet, and desirable prosperity, without government; and no government can stand without correspondent obligations to submit thereto.”

Q. But should not the government of christian churches be maintained by the pastors and the people conjointly, and have not all the members an equal right to vote on church questions?

A. An equal right they cannot have. Nothing can be more absurd than the supposition that a youth of fifteen, who may have joined a christian church but a month, has an equal right to manage the affairs of that church with him who has been a member of it for half a century. That he who has the feebleness of a reed, and the instablity of water, has an equal right with him who has the permanency of a pillar, and the stability of a rock. Has the child an equal right to manage a family with a father, or a babe an equal right with a man? In all christian churches of any considerable magnitude, there will be members

who are young, ignorant, and inexperienced ; persons who have no judgment of their own, whose opinions are swayed by the multitude ; and to raise such to the rank and office of legislators, is the most direct way to puff them up with pride, and self conceit, and to endanger the safety of the church of which they may be members. In churches thus constituted, debates and contentions will be fostered ; forward, conceited, and talkative men will obtain dominion ; the aged, most pious, and experienced members will lose their influence ; and by referring every decision to numbers, and suffrages, all that is good and venerable, and influential, will be placed at the feet of an ecclesiastical democracy. And though ministers may deem it no less their duty than their interest, to call to their assistance in the management of church discipline, the most pious, experienced, and influential members of their community, yet the responsibility must be all their own ; of that they cannot divest themselves. The responsibility of a minister for his doctrine is admitted on all hands. But discipline is an institution for the preservation in the church of purity of doctrine, and purity of practice ; to attempt therefore to separate these, is a vain and irrational endeavour. Where discipline is relaxed, there is no security for doctrine ; and there are few degenerate churches, that may not refer their fall to the relaxation of their disciplinary bonds. If christian pastors be the constituted guardians of the doctrines of the church, they can only be so in any efficient degree by the administration of ecclesiastical discipline. Its execution is beyond question one of the most painful parts of a minister's duty ; and if the ministerial office were relieved from this, it would be far

less trying. There is no well informed, and single-minded minister, who, supposing the purity of the church could be otherwise preserved, would not rejoice to be exonerated from this burden. But where there is a consciousness of this solemn responsibility, a pastor cannot relinquish his authority, because no one can answer to God for him; and upon this ground he feels it absolutely needful to retain his situation of hazardous and painful pre-eminence. And hence "no society can abide in order and peace, under the management of equal and co-ordinate powers, without a single undivided authority, enabled to moderate affairs, and reduce them to a point; to arbitrate emergent cases of difference, to put good orders into execution, to curb the adversaries of order and peace: these things cannot be well performed, where there is a parity of many concurrents, apt to dissent, and able to check each other; no democracy can be supported without borrowing something from monarchy, no body can live without a head; an army cannot be without a general, a senate without a president, or a corporation without a supreme magistrate."

Q. But is it not dangerous for ministers to possess so much power; may they not turn tyrants, and lord it over God's heritage?

A. Power is dangerous in any human hands; since it may be abused, and prostituted to most mischievous purposes. Tyranny is but the perversion of power: none but fools however would reason against the use of a thing, merely because it may be abused. For what is there that men may not abuse? Even the grace of God may be turned into lasciviousness. But we "must not put down all government for fear of tyranny; else kingdoms, armies, colleges, and

schools, must all be dissolved as well as churches." Where there is discipline, some persons must be invested with power to maintain it. "Discipline in a church occupies the place of laws in a state; and as a kingdom, however excellent in its constitution, will inevitably sink into a state of extreme wretchedness, in which laws are either not enacted, or not duly administered; so a church which pays no attention to discipline will either fall into confusion, or into a state so much worse, that little or nothing will remain worth regulating. The right of inflicting censures, and of proceeding in extreme cases to excommunication, is an essential branch of that power; and bears the same relation to discipline that the administration of criminal justice bears to the general principles of government. When this right is exerted, it maintains its proper place, and is highly beneficial. Nothing in the order of means, is equally adapted to awaken compunction in the guilty, with spiritual censures impartially administered: the sentence of excommunication in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible: it is the voice of God speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises, or neglects, ranks with 'heathen men and publicans,' joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world doomed to perdition."

The charge of ministers turning tyrants, and lording it over God's heritage, is of too common a character, and antiquated a date, to excite any surprise. Men upon whom God has put honour have seldom failed to excite the people's envy. The conspiracy of Korah and his company, in the Jewish church, meets with many a parallel in the Christian church.

"Ye take too much upon you," was then the watchword for rebellion. The populace are never better pleased, than when they are caressed, and their superiors censured; but it was against Aaron's God that these factious men lifted up themselves, and therefore he came out of his place and punished them in a most signal manner for their iniquity.

Q. On what accounts was the punitive discipline of the church inflicted on its members?

A. The apostles exercised great forbearance towards those whom they had begotten through the gospel. 'They had them in their hearts to live and die with them; they longed after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ; and they were gentle among them even as a nurse cherisheth her children. When any of them fell from their stedfastness, they sought to restore them in the spirit of meekness. But while they pitied, admonished, and prayed for those who were overtaken in a fault, they pursued a widely different course of conduct towards irreclaimable offenders; these, they separated from the church. The offences which rendered this painful discipline necessary, were,

First. 'The propagation of erroneous opinions. So deeply sensible were the apostles of the importance of the doctrines they preached, that St. Paul said to the Galatians, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed," or an anathema; that is, cut off from the congregation of the worshippers of God by excommunication, or separated to be publicly punished by death. Elsewhere he says, "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." And according to the general opinion of commentators,

the punishment inflicted on Hymeneus and Alexander, was for the propagation of false doctrines. Philetus, also, who is mentioned by the apostle in terms of disapprobation, was a character of the same description. He had affirmed that the resurrection was passed already, and had overthrown the faith of some.

Secondly. They who created schisms and divisions in the church, were, if found incorrigible, separated from it. Thus St. Paul charges Titus, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." By an heretic, the apostle does not merely mean a man who espouses and propagates false doctrine, but one who seeks to make a sect, and create a party by the propagation of such doctrine. The note by Beza on the above passage is, "The ministers of the word must at once cast off heretics; that is, such as stubbornly and seditiously disquiet the church, and will give no ear to ecclesiastical admonitions." Heresy, as the word is used by St. Paul, 1 Corinthians, II. 19, is, according to Mr. Wesley, exactly equivalent with the term schism; and he says, "this word therefore, which has been so strangely distorted for many centuries, as if it meant erroneous opinions, opinions contrary to the faith delivered to the saints—which has been made a pretence for destroying cities, depopulating countries, and shedding seas of innocent blood—has not the least reference to opinions, whether right or wrong; it simply means, wherever it occurs in Scripture, divisions, or parties in a religious community;" and hence an heretic, if the above statement be correct, must be one who seeks to create divisions and schisms in the church. And though

the apostle, to the Romans, does not pronounce the sentence of expulsion upon persons of this character, yet the charge which he gives to the believers to avoid them, affords no inconsiderable proof that they were not permitted to enjoy the communion of saints.

Thirdly. Disorderly walkers were expelled from the church. Thus the incestuous Corinthian was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. "And I have written unto you," says St. Paul, "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one no not to eat;" either in his own house, or the house of another person; and far less at the Lord's table—that he may be ashamed of his evil practices. Indeed the primitive christians were even more careful to avoid the society of false professors, than of open unbelievers. With the latter, they had occasionally, some intercourse, 1 Cor. v. 10, 11. With the former, they were not even to eat. Our Saviour commended the zeal of the Ephesians, Rev. ii. 2, who could not bear inconsistent professors. They had tried those who called themselves "apostles and were not, and had found them liars." Writing to the Thessalonians St. Paul says, "If any man obey not our word, by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Beza thinks that the expression, "note that man," literally, "put a mark upon that man," means excommunicate him; to which meaning the subsequent clause seems to agree.

Q. Might not many who have fallen by their iniquity, be renewed again to repentance, were the

members of christian churches to follow them with their sympathies, their intreaties, and their prayers?

A. From the kind, and reiterated expostulations of God with "backsliding children" in the Jewish church, and from his merciful conduct towards David and Peter, we may infer his infinite willingness to receive into his favour, and family, all returning prodigals; and those whom God is willing to receive, should be exhorted, and urged, and intreated to return to him. No means should be left unattempted to awaken their consciences, and to lead them to remember from whence they are fallen. Apostate sinners are most pitiable objects; they are taken in the snare of the devil; and they have little disposition, and less power to make their escape. Evil, in proportion as the practice of it has been indulged, has obtained a dominion over them, which they cannot control. The only means by which they might recover their forfeited peace are neglected. The house of God is forsaken, those with whom they once associated for christian fellowship, are shunned; and hence their condition, though not absolutely hopeless, is yet extremely perilous. "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Q. Do not the Scriptures authorize us to believe that the christian church will attain to a state of prosperity surpassing any thing that the world has ever witnessed?

A. Yes; it is a commonly received opinion, that before the dissolution of all things, and the final judgment, a great moral and spiritual change will

take place among the inhabitants of our world; when the church, so long accustomed to sit in sackcloth, shall put on her beautiful garments, and be made an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations.

Q. In what will this prosperity chiefly consist?

A: There will in the first place, be a great numerical increase to the church; the number of believers will be multiplied. The rejected Jews shall be recovered to the faith and privileges of the children of God. Blindness in part has happened unto Israel;—they have been cut off from the olive tree for their unbelief, and dispersed into all lands. Age has followed age, and they remain at this time a fearful, and an affecting testimony to the truth of Divine revelation: they are without their sanctuary, without their Messiah; and without the hope of their believing ancestors. But it shall not be always thus; they are still beloved for their fathers' sake, and when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, they too shall be gathered. They shall discover in Jesus of Nazareth, the marks of the promised Messiah, and with a tenderness proportioned to their former insensibility, shall cling to his cross; and being grafted into their own olive tree, all Israel shall be saved. It was through their fall that salvation came to us Gentiles, and if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? Then the enmity which has for ages subsisted between Jew and Gentile shall be slain. Then they shall take sweet counsel together, and go to the house of God in company; then Zion shall travail and bring forth her children, a nation shall be born at once, and Messiah's converts, shall

“ All redeemed from error’s night,

“ Appear as numberless and bright,

“ As crystal drops of morning dew.”

Nor will the prosperity of the church in the latter day glory, consist merely in the vast accessions made to her numbers, but in the union and harmony of her believing converts. It has been a subject of deep regret, to the more pious and benevolent members of christian churches, that under the influence of party feeling, professors have engaged in unhallowed warfare against the doctrines which they have severally espoused. Instead of contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints, in all the meekness of wisdom, they have contended against each other in all the bitterness of bigotry; have substituted asperity for argument, and wielded the weapons of controversy, not against the mystery of iniquity, but against the mystery of godliness. Nor have they been satisfied with pouring contempt upon each other’s sentiments; they have misrepresented each other’s meaning, and defamed each other’s characters. But happily, these fierce and fiery contentions have of late years greatly subsided; there is a spirit of benevolence gone abroad among the churches of the saints. Christians of different sentiments now look favourably upon each other; and, forgetting the peculiarities of their several creeds, in the true spirit of devotion, they mingle their prayers and praises together, at the throne of the heavenly grace. And in proportion as the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, their love towards each other will abound more and more; and when the church appears in her glory, her officers shall be peace, and her exactors righteousness; and by the kings of the earth bring-

ing their glory and honour to her, shall be accomplished that gracious, but highly figurative promise—the mountains shall bring peace unto the people, and the little hills righteousness. Her prince, whose throne is for ever and ever, shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people; then the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim; fear and the sword, shall be far away. They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid. “For thus saith the Lord, violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders, but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise.”

Q. Can you suppose that when these ancient promises are fulfilled, that a harmony of opinion will prevail on all doctrinal questions in all the sections of the church?

A. That is a question difficult to answer. Whether during the millennial glory of the church, names and sects and parties will be utterly abolished, I am unable to say. If there be not oneness of opinion, we may safely affirm there will be oneness of affection. Diversity, or contrariety of sentiment must invariably spring from ignorance; truth is one, and cannot therefore be at variance with itself. If two individuals think differently on any given subject, it necessarily follows that one at least must think erroneously; and were all men thoroughly and perfectly instructed in the things of God, harmony of opinion would be the unavoidable consequence. One of the most distinguished privileges which the church will enjoy in the latter periods of the world, will be the

possession of a large measure of Divine knowledge. Ignorance of God is now awfully, and almost universally prevalent; men do not like to retain God in their knowledge, and they say unto God—depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: but God by Isaiah declares “All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer the mighty one of Jacob:” and again by the same prophet it is said, “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon thy shoulders; and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens shall be thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and shall lick the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.” And by the prophet Jeremiah, God declares—“This is the covenant, that I will make in those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying, know ye the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least even unto the greatest: for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.” And by the prophet Habakkuk it is said, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” The world shall be as full of this knowledge, as the channels of the sea are with water; so extensively will it spread, and so widely will it diffuse its influence. But this knowledge must not be understood as referring to God’s absolute and

independent existence; but to the scriptural representations of the Divine nature, and to the relations in which God stands to his church; and the earth being full of this knowledge, every kind of knowledge, that can be at all beneficial to man in his present probationary state of existence, will be induced in its train. For the progression of knowledge has been constant in every country where christianity has prevailed: there reason shines with a more radiant lustre, science walks with a steadier step, justice holds a more even balance, and friendship lends a more soothing hand. And in proportion as christianity becomes triumphant, all that error and ignorance which have given birth to so much bigotry in the world, and lighted up so many fires of controversy in the church, shall cease to exist; then a most happy state of society will be introduced and perpetuated; when gratitude shall bound in every bosom, joy sparkle in every eye, benevolence breathe in every breast, and universal love fill the earth. Thus Isaiah, in that prophetic and figurative description which he furnishes of the universal harmony that shall reign in the world under the Messiah's peaceful dominion, when men of fierce, lion-like, and wolfish dispositions shall become meek, and pacific as the lamb; adds, as the reason for this astonishing change, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Q. How will this great moral revolution be effected?

A. Several things will conspire to produce it. There will be a great accession to the number of gospel ministers; for whatever moral changes are effected in the world, the ministers of Christ are the

appointed instruments for their accomplishment. If the wilderness become a fruitful field, it is by them that the fallow ground is broken up, the precious seed sown; and it is they that will return with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. If the strong holds of sin are to be pulled down, and the fortresses of the enemy destroyed, it is they who must wield the weapons of the gospel warfare, and carry the battle to the gate. If sinners are to be reconciled unto God, the ambassadors of Christ must be charged with the messages of mercy, and the ministry of reconciliation. And wherever God has revived his work, and extended the knowledge of his name, it has been by the instrumentality of his ministers. Referring to the latter days, the prophet said, Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased; and our Lord declared, that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, as a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

In addition to the universal diffusion of Divine truth throughout the world, there will be extraordinary effusions of the Spirit of God, to give efficacy to the word of his grace. It is the Holy Ghost who will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, but this will be effected by applying the word of truth to the consciences of sinners. The wonderful effects produced by St. Peter's sermon at the feast of Pentecost, cannot be attributed to any peculiar, or exclusive excellency in the doctrine which he preached, nor in the manner of his stating it; but to the power of the Spirit which accompanied the ministration of the word: and the success of the gospel must ever depend on His agency. It is only when the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high

that the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. We are entitled to believe from prophetical Scriptures, that glorious manifestations of the Spirit will be made to the church in the latter period of the world. "I will pour," saith the Lord, "water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring. I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.—And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."

Q. But were not these prophecies accomplished by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the people at the feast of Pentecost?

A. Partially they were; but that they did not receive their full accomplishment at that remarkable period, is evident from the language of Peter, Acts ii. 39, where speaking of the gift of the Holy Ghost, he says to his hearers, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." For though Peter, when he uttered these words, might have referred only to the dispersed of Israel in distant nations; yet the Spirit of God, under whose influence he spake, had undoubtedly the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ in view, and the consequent bestowment of his gifts and graces on his believing people.

Q. Seeing that so much is ascribed in the Scriptures, to the agency of the Holy Ghost, is it not a

duty incumbent on all christians, to pray most earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit on the church, and on the world?

A. Prayer possesses a sovereign, and an all-availing efficacy. God has most explicitly and peremptorily enjoined it; this makes it our bounden duty: God has sealed it with his immutable promise; this renders it our inestimable privilege. Prayer should therefore be made without ceasing by the church, that the kingdom of God may come—that his Spirit may be poured out upon all flesh—and that his word may have free course, and be glorified. This duty requires no sacrifice, but that of apathy—no funds, but those of piety and benevolence—and no talents, but such as believers universally possess. There is no way that christians in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God, and advance the kingdom of Christ, as by prayer.

The most eminent effusions of the Spirit we read of in Scripture, were not only afforded to prayer, but appear to have taken place at the very time that that exercise was performed. The descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, was while the disciples were with one accord in one place; and after the arraignment of Peter and John, by the rulers, who being dismissed went to their own company.—“When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Q. Is there any other event referred to in the Scripture, preparative to the universal diffusion of the gospel, and the future prosperity of the church?

A. Much of the wickedness that is in the world is by the instigation, and agency of the devil. He walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he

may devour. He blinds the mind, hardens the heart, corrupts the imagination, entices to acts of sin, picks up the good seed which is sown by the ministers of the gospel, and prevents the word from being fruitful. And it is by the craft and subtilty of the devil, that erroneous opinions are introduced into the church; these are denominated, "doctrines of devils;" and "the depths of Satan." But to usher in the millennial glory of the church, God, by his omnipotent arm, will restrain the power, and circumscribe the range, of the devil. His downfall is determined, his kingdom shall be brought to desolation; the decree is gone forth, and the harp of prophecy has been tuned to proclaim it, that Satan shall be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit, and a seal be set upon him that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years of Christ's spiritual reign upon earth shall be fulfilled. Then righteousness and truth shall be universally triumphant; then the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and be their God. Then shall be seen the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, which shall have no need of the sun, neither the moon to shine into it; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

ERRATUM.—*Page 25, line 4, from bottom, for communication, read communion.*